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1943

Evaluation of the relative appeal of reading assignments.

AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIVE APPEAL  
OF  
READING ASSIGNMENTS





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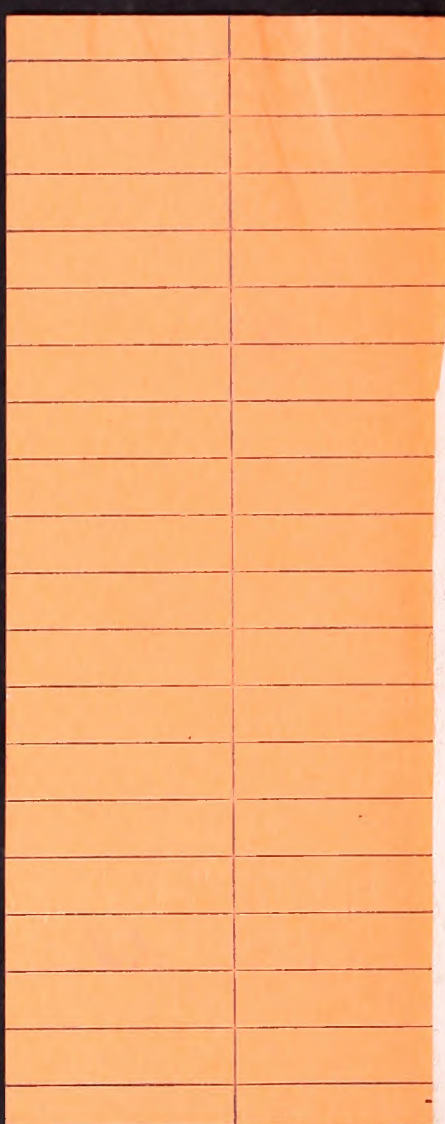
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THESIS

AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIVE APPEAL  
OF  
READING ASSIGNMENTS

by

Catharine L. Lyons

(B.S., Fitchburg State Teachers College, 1942)

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
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First Reader: Donald D. Durrell, Professor of Education  
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CHAPTER I  
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM  
AND  
PREVIOUS RESEARCH







STATEMENT OF PROBLEM  
AND  
PREVIOUS RESEARCH

PROBLEM:

An ability to read is a pre-requisite of all courses of study. Dewey claims, "Interest is the sole guarantee of attention".<sup>1</sup> There is an inter-dependence between reading and interest since one complements the other. The degree of efficiency in reading is proportionate to the intensity of interest and the attention span. The fact that reading and interest are essential elements precludes any other possibility than that both are of paramount importance in the school life of a child.

While many investigations concerning different facets of reading interests have been conducted, none deal exclusively with the interest evidenced in purposes for which children read when these interests are allied to reading assignments. Because a strong appeal to children's interests is desired in developing a reading program, and because the importance of a program of activity is recognized,<sup>2</sup> it seems reasonable to assume that an inventory of children's genuine responses to

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<sup>1</sup>John Dewey, Interest and Effort in Education (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, Riverside Press, 1913), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>The Twenty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1924), Part I, pp. 4-8.







such activities, in the light of reactions to reading assignments, would be a valuable factor in education.

Through an evaluation of children's reactions to reading assignments it is proposed to determine the relative degree of children's interests in various reading situations.

The investigation has been conducted for the following purposes:

1. To find out the relative degree of interest to which sixth grade children react to various reading assignments.
2. To note the difference, if any difference exists, in such interests between the children of progressive schools and those of conservative schools.
3. To discover whether or not sex differences have any bearing on the type of activity selected.
4. To find out the degree of variance in choices between poor readers and good readers.
5. To determine to what degree the selection of choices is influenced by intelligence.
6. To discover the preference of assignments when rated against each other in various combinations.
7. To record any notable individual differences in the selection of choices.

Uhl emphasizes the importance of consulting children in the selection and organization of courses in reading, and observes, "a firm belief that economical teaching always takes







into account the inclinations of the learner".<sup>1</sup>

The assumption then, that the reading program is motivated by the results of children's preferences, in so far as they are profitable, justifies this study.

#### PREVIOUS RESEARCH:

Because a knowledge of children's interests is useful in determining the success of reading, many investigations have been undertaken by educators to learn the nature of those interests. "More studies have been made recently concerning the reading interests of children than any other phase of reading."<sup>2</sup> However, evidence from these various surveys indicates that such investigations have been confined chiefly to interest in reading qualities and topics, the influence of intelligence, sex, and age on reading interest, and interest as evidenced by the number and kind of books read.

The earliest studies relating to children's interests in reading material were those which made evident the qualities that interest children.

By means of reading selections to children and recording

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<sup>1</sup>W. H. Uhl, The Materials of Reading (New York: Silver Burdett and Company, 1924), p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>William S. Gray, "Summary of Reading Investigations," Elementary School Journal, XXX (March, 1930), p. 505.





their reactions, Dunn<sup>1</sup> learned the qualities in reading material which were of interest to primary children. Judging from the votes of 17,000 children, the elements which in general were found to arouse the greatest degree of interest in children were surprise, plot, narrativeness, animalness, conversation and familiar experience. Interest in this last quality confirmed the results of an earlier study by Wissler.<sup>2</sup>

Zellar<sup>3</sup> reported, in a recent study on the reading interests of 2,052 girls and 1,995 boys of junior high school grades, that the qualities of action and humor are by far the most important ones in the reading material for children in these grades. It is also agreed by Terman and Lima<sup>4</sup> that action in the form of adventure is the leading interest quality for boys of junior high school age.

Further reference to the qualities and characteristics which interest children in their reading material will be

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<sup>1</sup>Fannie W. Dunn, Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921).

<sup>2</sup>Clark Wissler, "The Interest of Children in Reading Work of the Elementary Schools," Pedagogical Seminary, V (April, 1898), pp. 523-540.

<sup>3</sup>Dale Zellar, The Relative Importance of Factors of Interest in Reading Materials (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, Number 841, Bureau of Publications, 1941), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup>L. Terman and M. Lima, Children's Reading (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), p. 38.





made as they occur in the treatment of studies relating to sex differences in reading interests.

That sex has a direct influence on the reading interests of children is a conclusion that is warranted by the results of many studies.

In addition to her other general findings, Dunn<sup>1</sup> learned that sex differences regarding interest qualities are apparent even in the primary grades. She reported not only that, "there were slight inclinations toward stories of one's own sex in the first three grades,"<sup>2</sup> but that the sex differences in reading interests increase with the grades. Vostrovsky<sup>3</sup> and Wissler<sup>4</sup> in their investigations too, show that sex differences in reading interest increase with the grade.

Terman and Lima<sup>5</sup> report that the books which interest boys are read by boys exclusively, and those which interest girls are read by girls almost exclusively. They also report that boys read more science and non-fiction than girls.

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<sup>1</sup>Fannie W. Dunn, Interest Factors in Primary Reading Material, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Clara Vostrovsky, "A Study of Children's Reading Tastes", Pedagogical Seminary, VI (December, 1899), pp. 523-538.

<sup>4</sup>Clark Wissler, "The Interest of Children in Reading Work of the Elementary Schools", pp. 523-540.

<sup>5</sup>L. Terman and M. Lima, Children's Reading, pp. 68-76.





The conclusion made by Terman and Lima, that the reading interests of boys and girls are not alike, is confirmed by Jordan<sup>1</sup> in a study made by direct observation of ten to thirteen year old children at eight public libraries in and around New York City. He found, "the major interests of boys and girls in reading are very dissimilar."<sup>2</sup> The major interests of boys are concerned with books on war and scouting, school and sports, and strenuous adventure, while the major interests of girls are concerned with books on home, school, fairy stories, love, and stories with historical background.

The statement by Jordan that, "Girls and boys read almost entirely different books"<sup>3</sup> is upheld by Washburne and Vogel<sup>4</sup> who, from the results of data from 36,750 children, "have no doubt as to their being real differences between the interest reactions of boys and those of girls."<sup>5</sup>

B. Lamar Johnson<sup>6</sup> reports, in accordance with the other

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Jordan, Children's Interest in Reading (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1926).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>C. Washburne and M. Vogel, What Children Like to Read (New York: Rand Mc Nally and Company, American Library Association, 1926).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>6</sup>B. Lamar Johnson, "Children's Reading Interests as Related to Sex and Grade in School," School Review, XL (1932), pp. 257-272.





investigators, that sex determines the interest in reading material, and from his investigation reports that adventure and animal stories are popular with boys in all grades, and that girls in all grades are interested in books about home and children.

Thorndike<sup>1</sup> investigated the interest in reading topics by means of a fictitious annotated titles questionnaire given to 2,891 children from grade four through high school, and ranging in intelligence quotients from under seventy to over one hundred forty-eight. He concludes that, "sex is conspicuously more important than age or intelligence as a determiner of reported interest patterns, at least within the range of age and ability here studied"<sup>2</sup>, a finding entirely in accord with previous investigations.

While the influence of age and grade on children's reading interests has not been the exclusive concern of any one study, its importance has been stressed by several investigators,<sup>3</sup> and they all agree that reading interests change with

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>a) A. M. Jordan, Children's Interests in Reading, pp. 48-51.

b) L. Terman and M. Lima, Children's Reading, pp. 31-45.

c) B. L. Johnson, "Children's Reading Interests as Related to Sex and Grade in School", pp. 257-272.





age. Washburne and Vogel,<sup>1</sup> from the results of their investigation on the reading interests of 36,750 children, found definite grade interests to be of great importance in children's reading. On the basis of this study they compiled a graded book list<sup>2</sup> which conforms to the definite reading interests of children in each grade.

Studies on interest in the number and kinds of books read have been reported by Johnson,<sup>3</sup> Beggs,<sup>4</sup> and Campbell.<sup>5</sup> They, with the exception of Campbell, agree that fiction is favored over non-fiction.

Beggs reports that the attitude toward reading which prevails in the home is reflected in the child. Seventy-five per cent of pupils who read no books outside of school in a six month period came from homes where there were fewer than one hundred books. She concludes that the number of books in the home is somewhat indicative of the amount of reading

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<sup>1</sup>C. Washburne and M. Vogel, What Children Like to Read, pp. 33-38.

<sup>2</sup>C. Washburne and M. Vogel, Winnetka Graded Book List (Chicago: American Library Association, 1927).

<sup>3</sup>B. L. Johnson, "Children's Reading Interests as Related to Sex and Grade in School," pp. 257-272.

<sup>4</sup>Berenice Beggs, "Does Environment Determine a Child's Reading?" School and Community XIV (January, 1928), pp. 16-18.

<sup>5</sup>Clara Campbell, "A Research Problem in Children's Reading", Elementary English Review, VI (January, 1929), pp. 1-2, 27-28.





that is done by the child.

Campbell, from the results of her investigation of seven hundred fifty-three readers from four to eleven years, reports that more girls than boys borrow books and that only thirty-five children included in her study read fiction exclusively.

The influence of intelligence on the reading interests of children has been studied by many investigators. Terman and Lima<sup>1</sup> found a notable difference in the amount of reading done by children of different intelligence levels. They report that children in the higher brackets of intelligence read more science, history, and informational fiction than do the less gifted children.

By reading selections to the children, thereby eliminating the obstacle of reading disabilities, Huber<sup>2</sup> found the level of intelligence was of little or no importance regarding the choices that children made. There was a similarity in preferences among the bright, average and dull, with one exception, the dull preferred more familiar experience and less humor than the average and bright.

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<sup>1</sup>L. Terman and M. Lima, Children's Reading, pp. 51-67.

<sup>2</sup>M. B. Huber, Influence of Intelligence Upon Children's Reading Interests (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, Number 312, Bureau of Publications, 1928).





In her study, Lazar<sup>1</sup> also notes the similarity of interests among bright, average, and dull children; and adds the fact that the bright include a wider range than the average, and they, in turn, read more than the dull children.

From the results of his study which investigated reading topics, Thorndike concluded that, "within the same sex the interest patterns of groups differing by several years in age, or as much as thirty points in average intelligence show a substantial positive correlation".<sup>2</sup>

In summary the findings of these various investigations regarding the reading interests of children seem to be:

1. Children read the material that is exposed to them.
2. Regardless of intelligence, children prefer to read about the same subjects, but at different age levels.
3. The more intelligent the child, the more he reads and the wider is the range of material selected.
4. Sex differences in reading interests are very marked.
5. Interest qualities as familiar experience, adventure, mystery, scouting, and feminine characteristics rate high in the reading interests of children.

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<sup>1</sup>May Lazar, Reading Interests, Activities, and Opportunities of Bright, Average and Dull Children (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, Number 707, Bureau of Publications, 1937).

<sup>2</sup>Robert L. Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests, p.35.





The correlation of children's interests and motives in reading is a fundamental concern of this study. It differs from former surveys in that the primary concern of this study is the degree of interest indicated in motives for reading rather than in the degree of interest evidenced in any other phase of reading. It notes children's reactions to the type of activity selected in executing certain reading assignments, and evaluates the degree of interest resulting from the choices made by the children after they have compared and weighed the assignments for interest value.





## CHAPTER II

### CONSTRUCTION OF INTEREST TEST

#### AND

### DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENT





CONSTRUCTION OF INTEREST TEST  
AND  
DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENT

CONSTRUCTION OF TEST:

Reference will be made to portions of the previous research done in connection with this investigation which show that certain aspects in the development of this study are contingent upon the results of previous investigations and observations. The findings in various publications have been incorporated in this investigation. These contributions will be noted as they illustrate some of the basic principles of this study.

The Interest Test<sup>1</sup> used in this investigation was designed to evaluate the relative degree of children's interests in different kinds of reading situations. It is concerned with the purposes for which children like to read, and attempts to find out, in general, which of the following activities allied to reading are most interesting to sixth grade children: talking, writing, constructing, entertaining, going on excursions, or reading with no activity involved.

In an efficient reading program, pupils interests, purposes, and activities are important guides to the effective

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<sup>1</sup>Interest Test; Appendix.





teaching of reading. Gray<sup>1</sup> suggests that the attainment of appropriate reading attitudes and habits requires a comprehensive program of reading instruction. Several concrete experiences,<sup>2</sup> which have been considered important in the development of reading, are requisites for such a program. These activities, which might relate to reading experiences,<sup>3</sup> such as excursions, construction work, dramatizations, discussions, music appreciation, and story telling were stressed.

Gates claims that, "An inventory of the types of activities which interest children is necessary but insufficient. We need to know that activities are profitable as well as interesting."<sup>4</sup>

John Dewey<sup>5</sup> maintains that a program based on educational philosophy should involve four fundamental activities which tend to stimulate and foster the growth of children's interests. These are communicative, exploratory, constructive, and artistic. To this list Gates<sup>6</sup> adds dramatic activities.

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<sup>1</sup>William Gray, Thirty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 280 and 306.

<sup>3</sup>Twenty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, pp. 6, 7 and 29.

<sup>4</sup>A. I. Gates, The Interest and Ability in Reading (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931) p. 116.

<sup>5</sup>John Dewey, School and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1900), p. 61.

<sup>6</sup>A. I. Gates, op. cit. p. 118.







Because of their merit, all of these activities are included in the reading exercises used in this study. For purposes of this investigation the activities have been classified in the following categories: communicative, those based on oral or written speech; constructive, those utilizing constructing work of any kind; exploratory, all types of excursions; dramatic, those used in presenting a program for purposes of entertaining; and artistic, those which involve art or music.

The specific activities to be evaluated, and around which the assignments were constructed are writing, talking, constructing, going on excursions, and reading assignments without activity.

Subject matter material and activities used in the assignments of this interest test were suggested by the following professional and textbooks:

Carolyn Bailey, Broad Stripes and Bright Stars (Springfield, Massachusetts: Milton Bradley Company, 1920).

George Freeland, Edward Walker and Helen Williams, America's Building (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942).

Carol Hovious and Elga Shearer, Wings for Reading (Boston, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1942).

Mary Kelty, The American Colonies (Boston, Massachusetts: Ginn and Company, 1932).

Daniel Knowlton and Charles Gill, When We Were Colonies (New York: American Book Company, 1934).

W. Knox, G. Stone, M. Meister and D. Wheatley, The Wonder-world of Science (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941).

Howard Hill, Rollo Lyman and Nellie Moore, Reading and Living (Boston, Massachusetts: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).







Paul Spencer, Roma Gans and Lois Fritschler, Thought-Study Readers (New York: Lyons and Carnahan, 1930).

Grace Storm, The Social Studies in the Primary Grades (New York: Lyons and Carnahan, 1931).

Twenty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1924).

Thirty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1937).

Gerald Yoakam, William Bagley and Philip Knowlton, Reading to Learn (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937).

The assignments in the interest test are divided into six categories involving interests to which the suggested activities are connected. The six categories are science, social studies, literature and language, music and art, vocational interests and interests in sports and hobbies. Each category contains eighteen reading assignments representing the activities which are being evaluated.

"The teacher of every curriculum field is recognized as a teacher of reading."<sup>1</sup> This statement emphasizes the fact that reading is not an isolated subject, and that it embraces every phase of school work.

Because the approach to practically all school subjects is through reading, the subject selections of the exercises used in this study are governed largely by their importance in the curriculum. These subject divisions are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Thirty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I., p. 19.







Science, Literature, Social Studies, Music and Art, Vocations, Sports and Hobbies. The last two, although not strictly subject matter, are included because they rate high on Thorndike's<sup>1</sup> list.

In the opinion of several authors,<sup>2</sup> the selection of reading materials for children should be guided by their own interests. Assuming that an effective approach to the reading program is through interest, the topics selected for this study are, as far as possible, consistent with the interests of children.

In order to secure reliable material, the results of several studies were consulted, and the topics in this investigation are principally restricted to those appearing in accredited lists or studies. For purposes of illustration, a few examples are given. Topics pertaining to mystery, reporting, photography and camping rate from moderately high to high on Thorndike's list.<sup>3</sup> Scouting and aviation are in the upper fourth of Jordan's list.<sup>4</sup> The selection of reading assignments

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests, pp. 31-34.

<sup>2</sup>a) M. M. Stroh, Literature for Grades VII to IX (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, Number 234, Bureau of Publications, 1926), p.61.

b) A. I. Gates, The Interest and Ability in Reading, p.114

c) A. M. Jordan, Children's Interest in Reading, p. 1.

d) Dale Zellar, The Relative Importance of Factors of Interest in Reading Materials, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests, pp. 27-34

<sup>4</sup>A. M. Jordan, Children's Interest in Reading, p. 22.







about Louisa May Alcott and Heidi was influenced by their reported popularity in several investigations.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of some of the topics in the exercise is not justified by any specific studies, but their inclusion may be defended by the fact that the material in such cases appears in the Grade VI course of study or in Grade VI textbooks.

The exercise used in this investigation is divided into six categories involving interests to which the suggested activities are connected. Each category contains eighteen reading assignments representing the six activities which are being evaluated. In order that the selection of choices to be concentrated upon at one time would not be too many, the exercises were divided into groups of three assignments to be judged as a first, second or third choice.

To obviate the possibility of having any of the activities over-emphasized by a set pattern of choices, should a child treat the exercise in such a disinterested manner, the following precaution was taken. Each activity was grouped with all

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<sup>1</sup>a) Dale Zellar, The Relative Importance of Factors of Interest in Reading Materials, p. 20.

b) C. Washburne and M. Vogel, What Children Like to Read, p. 217.

c) B. L. Johnson, "Children's Reading Interests as Related to Sex and Grade in School," pp. 257-272.

d) A. M. Jordan, Children's Interests in Reading, pp. 26 and 98.

e) T. J. Lancaster, "A Study of the Voluntary Reading of Pupils in Grades IV to VIII." Elementary School Journal, XXVIII, (1928), p. 527.







the five other activities an equal number of times, but in each succeeding group the order of activities was rotated. In this manner the position of each activity varied in every group. Judging from the interest evidenced while giving the exercise to one hundred twenty-five pupils, and the reports of interest from the teachers who gave the exercise to the other one hundred seventy-five, together with the many comments written by the children in the margins of the exercise, it can be assumed that all items were given careful consideration before being evaluated. A sample set of assignments follows:

Group 13

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making scenery for a play about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make a notebook about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your visit to a museum to see an exhibition on the history of the American flag.

Group 14

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can give a short talk to the class on the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help so you can give, for a visiting class, a short play about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the history of the American flag.

DESCRIPTION OF EXPERIMENT

THE POPULATION:

This study is based on the results of an interest test which was given to three hundred sixth grade pupils from sections of suburban Boston, Massachusetts. One hundred twenty-





five pupils were located in conservative schools, that is, where the traditional textbook method was used almost exclusively. One hundred seventy-five children were in progressive schools where teaching was not so restricted.

The children ranged in intelligence quotients from seventy-nine to one hundred fifty-five. These figures are results of the Kuhlmann-Anderson and the Henmon-Nelson mental tests which were given in the current year, except in two cases, where the tests were given the preceeding year.

The reading grade status, computed from the Stanford Achievement and the Metropolitan Achievement tests, ranged from 4.8 to 9.3. A preliminary try out of the exercise on a group whose reading ability was below 4.8 demonstrated the fact that the exercise was not wholly within their comprehension. Therefore, it was deemed advisable for present purposes to disregard the exercises of all pupils who tested below 4.8. The following table demonstrates the range:

Table I

Range of Intelligence Quotients and Reading Grade Status of Boys and Girls in Conservative and Progressive Schools

	I. Q. 79-99	I. Q. 100-145	Read. Gr. 4.8 to 6.3	Read. Gr. 6.4 to 9.3	Prog. School	Conserv. School
Boys	34	121	47	107	87	68
Girls	31	114	46	100	88	57





METHOD OF ADMINISTERING THE EXERCISE:

The exercise, given to ten sixth grades, was self-explanatory. It was either given to the class as a group or to each child to be filled out at his leisure. In either case, the child was permitted to ask for information if he should be unfamiliar with any of the topics. The teacher was asked to stress the fact that all three exercises in the group be read before being rated. The time for completing the exercise varied from twelve to twenty-five minutes.





## INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### CHAPTER III

#### INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS





## INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

In analyzing the results of the investigation, only those preferences which were given first choice ratings are considered.

The results are organized in the following manner:

1. Order of preference for reading assignments which are allied to various activities.
2. The difference in interest between the assignments chosen by pupils of conservative schools and those chosen by pupils of progressive schools.
3. Sex differences indicated in the choice of assignments.
4. A comparison of good readers and poor readers in their choice of assignments.
5. The difference evidenced in choice of assignments between bright and dull children.
6. The preference of assignments as they are rated with each other in various combinations.
7. Individual differences.





Table II  
Order of Preference for Reading Assignments  
Involving Various Activities

300 cases

Activity	Mean Number of Times Chosen First	S. E. of Mean	Dif. of Mean*	S. E. of Dif.*	C. R.
Excursion	9.16	.20	1.62	.31	5.22
No Activity	7.54	.24	1.66	.29	5.72
Constructing	5.88	.16	.75	.22	3.41
Entertaining	5.13	.15	.75	.23	3.26
Talking	4.38	.17	.40	.23	1.73
Writing	3.98	.16			

\*between the activity and the one below it as:

- a) Excursion and No Activity
- b) No Activity and Constructing
- c) Constructing and Entertaining
- d) Entertaining and Talking
- e) Talking and Writing

Table II shows the order of interest, on the basis of the composite judgements of three hundred sixth grade boys and girls, in reading assignments which involve five activities and one assignment to which no activity was connected.

The most popular assignments were those associated with the activity of going on an excursion. Most children preferred reading to prepare for an excursion than to prepare for any other activity. The assignment which required reading in preparation for a visit to the High School Camera Club proved





to be the one exception. The majority of children rated this assignment in second or third place. It is possible that the defect in the assignment, of failing to include a specific purpose for the visit to the High School Camera Club, may have accounted for its low rating in comparison to the other excursion assignments.

The second most interesting ones, contrary perhaps to expectations, were the reading assignments to which no activity was allied.. It is evident that, next to reading in order to go on excursions, children preferred not to have any activity connected with their reading.

Reading assignments relating to construction activities were slightly favored over those pertaining to entertaining. In popularity, these assignments rated third and fourth respectively..

Assignments to which speaking activities were connected rated fifth in interest.

The least popular of all the assignments, and perhaps the type most teachers are prone to favor, were those which required written work. It is interesting to note also, that reading for the purpose of writing compositions was the least favored of all the assignments which involved writing.

The difference between 9.16, the mean for excursion assignments, and 7.54, the mean for assignments without activity resulted in a critical ratio of 5.22. This ratio indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of





reading assignments involving going on excursions over assignments without activity.

That reading assignments without activity were much preferred over assignments involving constructing activities is shown by the critical ratio of 5.72.

The critical ratio of 3.41 indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of assignments involving constructing activities over assignments which involve entertaining activities.

The difference between 5.13, the mean for assignments involving entertaining activities, and 4.38, the mean for assignments involving talking activities, resulted in a critical ratio of 3.26, a difference statistically significant in favor of assignments which involve entertaining activities.

That assignments involving writing and talking rated about the same degree of interest is evidenced by the critical ratio of 1.73, a difference between these two assignments that is not considered statistically significant.

Briefly, the results of Table II indicate that, next to reading in order to go on excursions, children preferred not to have any activity connected with their reading assignments. The interest order of the other activities in the assignments was as follows: constructing, entertaining, talking and writing.





Table III

Comparison of Preferences Between Children in  
Conservative and Progressive Schools

Activity	Conservative Schools N. 125		Progressive Schools N. 175				
	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Dif. of Mean	S. E. of Dif.	C. R.
Writing	4.07	.24	3.92	.21	.15	.28	.53
Talking	3.35	.20	5.13	.24	1.78	.31	5.76
Constructing	6.36	.23	5.55	.22	.81	.31	2.61
Entertaining	4.84	.20	5.33	.22	.49	.29	1.68
Excursion	9.20	.28	9.12	.29	.08	.40	.20
No Activity	8.16	.39	7.10	.30	1.06	.49	2.16

Reference to this table shows a comparison between the choices of children whose program has been enriched by numerous activities and the preferences of children whose program has been more or less restricted to textbook methods.

The following discrepancy between the responses of pupils in conservative schools and those of pupils in progressive schools is brought to attention. Children in conservative schools base their preferences on imaginary situations rather than on actual experiences resulting from a program of enriched reading situations. Therefore, if the distortion is to be minimized, the results should be interpreted in the light of





what children think they would like to do if given the opportunity.

This table indicates, that between the choices of pupils in conservative schools and those of children in progressive schools, the only distinction was in their selection of reading assignments which involved talking. The difference between 3.35, the mean for conservative schools and 5.13, the mean for progressive schools, gave a critical ratio of 5.76. This ratio indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of reading assignments which involved talking in progressive schools.

Less conspicuous, but deserving of attention, are the critical ratios of 2.61 and 2.16 denoting differences that approach statistical significance in favor of children in conservative schools in their preference for assignments involving constructing activities and assignments without activity.

The differences between the other choices were not significant.

The children of progressive schools may be said to favor reading assignments that involve talking and entertaining activities, while the children in conservative schools tend to favor reading assignments which include writing, constructing and excursion activities and assignments without activity.





Table IV

Sex Differences Indicated in the  
Choice of Assignments

Activity	Boys N. 155		Girls N. 145				
	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Dif. of Mean	S. E. of Dif.	C. R.
Writing	3.43	.20	4.56	.24	1.13	.31	3.64
Talking	4.64	.25	4.04	.22	.60	.33	1.81
Constructing	5.80	.22	5.98	.24	.18	.31	.58
Entertaining	5.10	.21	5.16	.22	.06	.30	.20
Excursion	9.19	.28	8.62	.31	.57	.41	1.39
No Activity	7.96	.35	6.68	.33	1.28	.48	2.66

A study of this table reveals only one reliable difference between boys and girls regarding their choice of reading assignments involving various activities. The difference between 3.43, the boys' mean for reading assignments involving writing, and 4.56, the girls' mean resulted in a critical ratio of 3.64. This statistically significant difference, in favor of the girls, shows their preference over the boys for assignments involving writing.

The difference between boys and girls in their preference for assignments without activity resulted in a critical ratio of 2.66, a difference that approaches statistical significance in favor of the boys.





Otherwise, there was no appreciable difference between the boys and girls in their choice of assignments involving the different activities.

Of all the activities included in the reading assignments, the girls favored writing, constructing and entertaining, while the boys tended to favor talking and excursion assignments and assignments without activity.

Table V

Comparison of Preferences Between  
Good Readers and Poor Readers

Activity	Good Readers N. 207		Poor Readers N. 93				
	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Dif. of Mean	S. E. of Dif.	C. R.
Writing	3.81	.20	2.99	.24	.82	.31	2.64
Talking	4.46	.22	4.20	.28	.26	.35	.74
Constructing	5.84	.20	3.98	.26	1.86	.32	5.81
Entertaining	5.26	.19	4.84	.24	.42	.30	1.40
Excursion	9.24	.27	8.54	.36	.70	.45	1.55
No Activity	7.52	.30	7.59	.42	.07	.51	.14

Only one statistically significant difference is apparent when the choices of good readers are compared with those of poor readers. The difference between 5.84, the mean for good readers, and 3.98, the mean for poor readers resulted in a critical ratio of 5.81.. This is interpreted as a significant





difference in favor of good readers in their preference for reading assignments which involve construction work.

The critical ratio of 2.64 approaches statistical significance and indicates a preference on the part of good readers for assignments which involve writing.

There was no great difference between good and poor readers in their choice of assignments involving talking, entertaining, going on excursions and reading assignments without activity.

With one exception, the table shows that the preference for all the assignments was in favor of the good readers. A very slight preference was indicated by poor readers in their choice of reading assignments which did not involve an activity.





Table VI

Comparison of Preferences Between  
Bright Children and Dull Children

Bright Children N. 234			Dull Children N. 66				
Activity	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Mean	S. E. of Mean	Dif. of Mean	S. E. of Dif.	C. R..
Writing	3.95	.18	4.07	.32	.12	.36	.33
Talking	4.76	.20	4.10	.31	.66	.36	1.83
Constructing	5.91	.18	5.80	.31	.11	.35	.31
Entertaining	4.50	.18	4.83	.30	.33	.34	.97
Excursion	9.07	.24	9.47	.37	.40	.44	.90
No Activity	7.58	.29	7.40	.43	.18	.51	.35

The results of this table indicate that there was no marked difference between bright children and dull children in interest evidenced by their choice of assignments involving different activities. The order of preference of each group is fairly consistent. However, the dull children show a slight preference over the bright children in assignments involving writing, entertaining and going on excursions, while the bright children indicate a slight preference for assignments involving talking and constructing activities and assignments without activity.





Graphs I through VI represent the per cent of children who chose reading assignments in various combinations when rated against each other.

Reading assignments involving writing, in general the least popular of all the assignments, rated highest when judged against assignments involving talking and assignments without activity.

Assignments which require reading for the purpose of talking, in general judged fifth in interest, proved to be most interesting when rated against assignments involving writing and constructing activities.

Reading assignments involving constructing activities, third in general interest, were judged most popular when rated against assignments involving writing and entertaining activities.

Reading for the purpose of entertaining, rating fourth in general interest, rated highest when judged against assignments which involve talking and writing activities.

Assignments which require reading in preparation for an excursion, in general the most popular of all, were most interesting when rated with assignments which involve entertaining and talking.

Reading without activity, rating second in general interest, proved to be most popular when judged with assignments which involve constructing and talking activities.

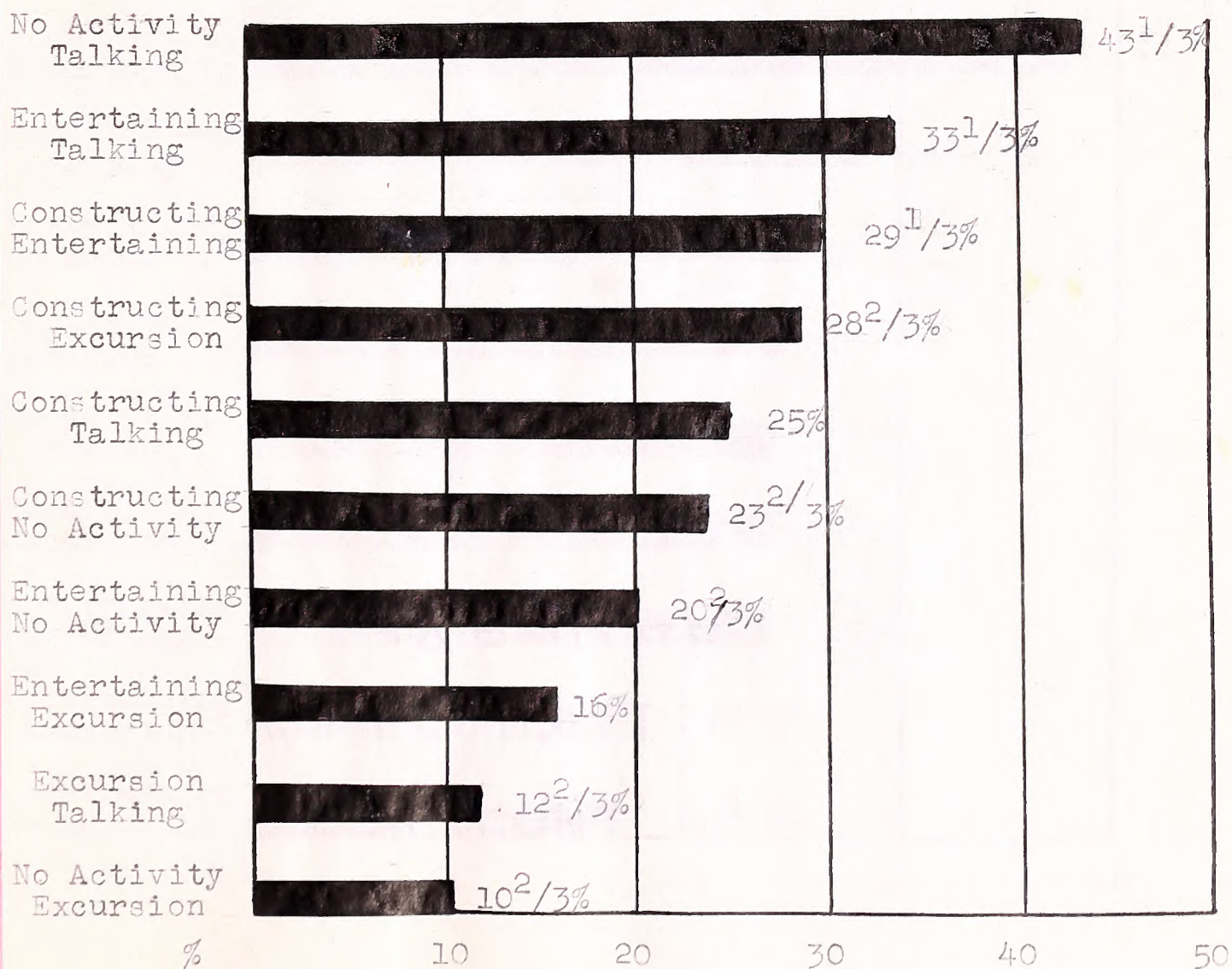




Graph I.

Per Cent of Children Choosing Writing Assignments  
When Rated With Other Assignments.

Writing  
Rated with:



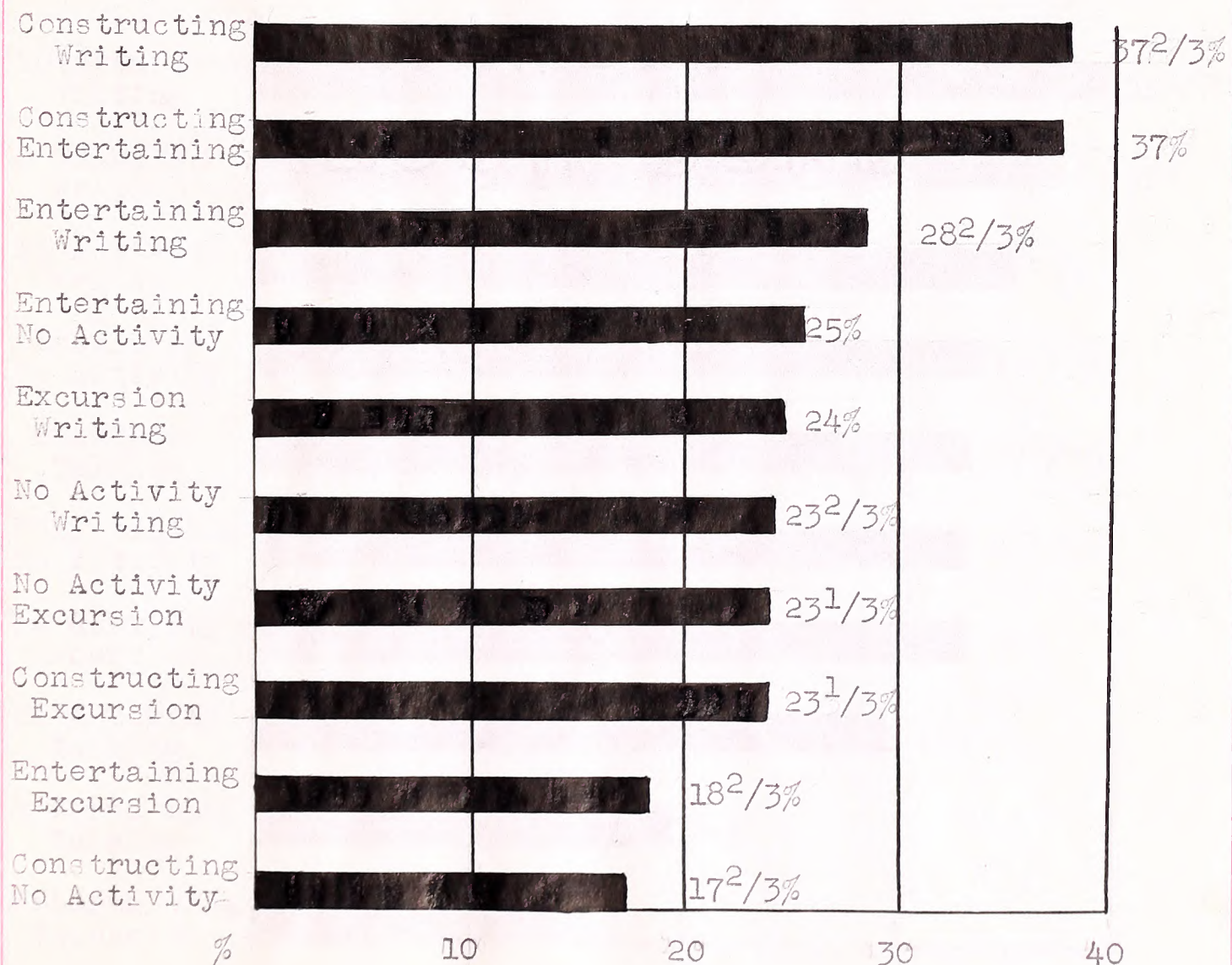




Graph II.

Per Cent of Children Choosing Talking Assignments  
When Rated With Other Assignments.

Talking  
rated with:



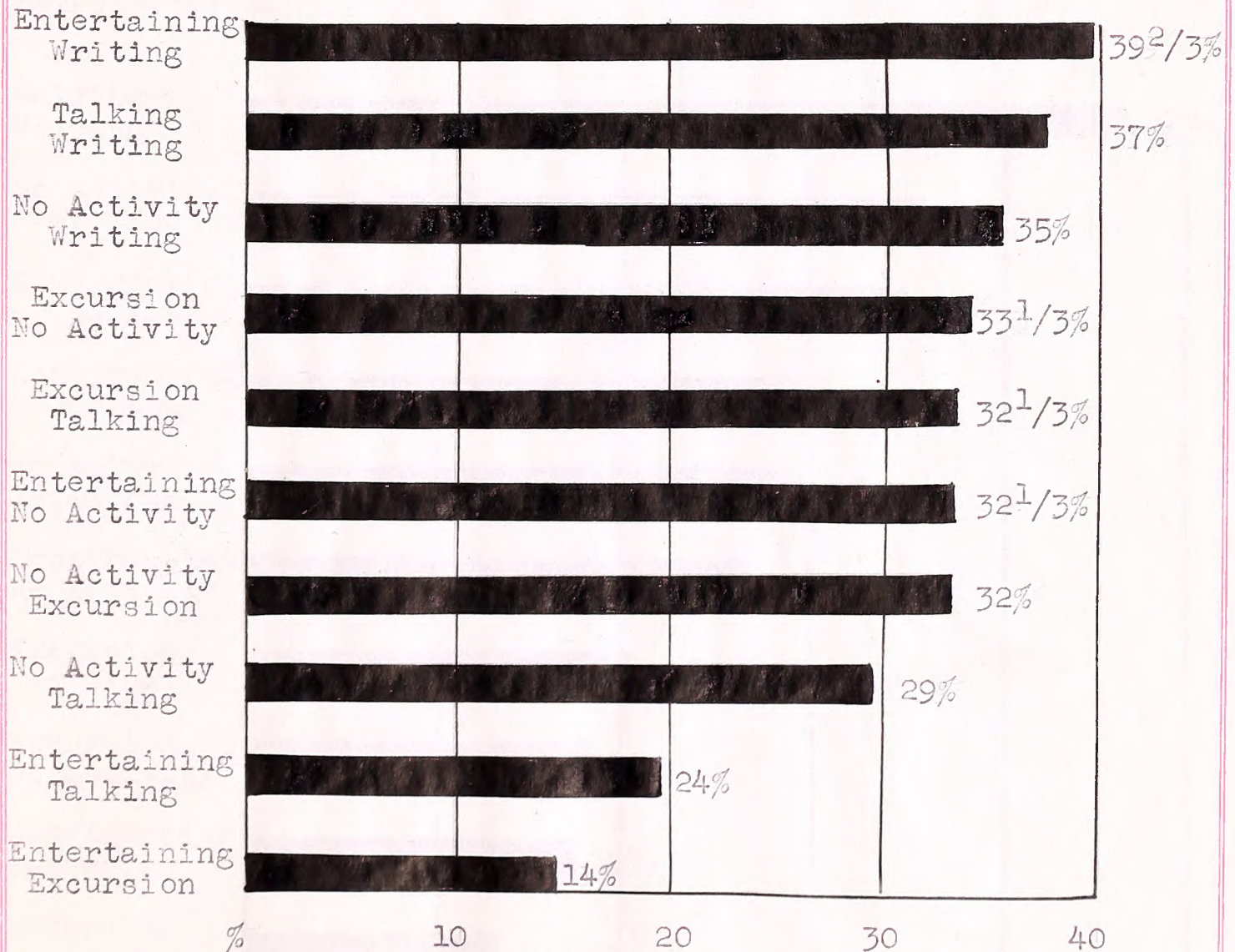




Graph III.

Per Cent of Children Who Chose Constructing Assignments  
When Rated With Other Assignments.

Constructing  
rated with:



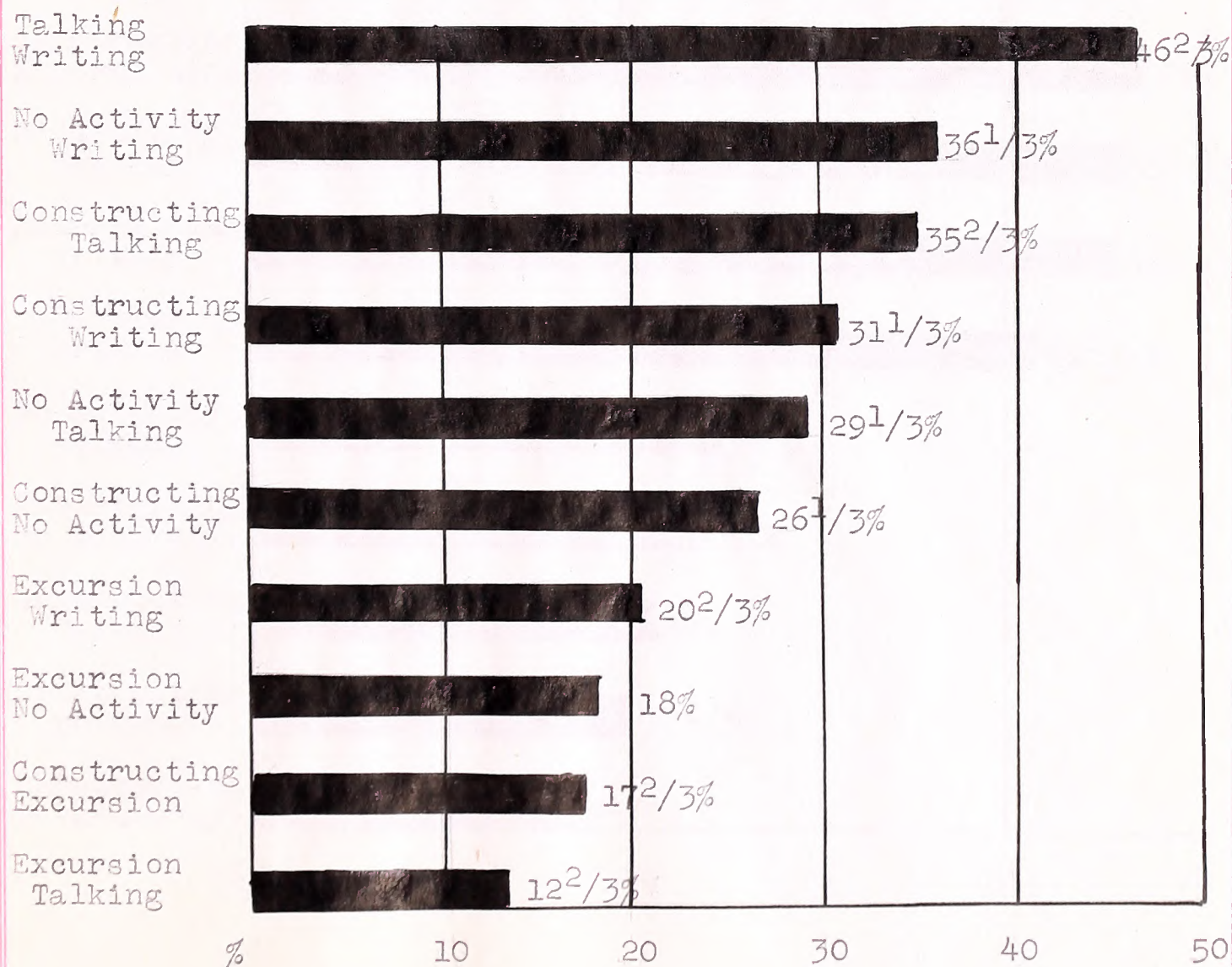




Graph 1V.

Per Cent of Children Choosing Entertaining Assignments  
When Rated with Other Assignments.

Entertaining  
rated with:



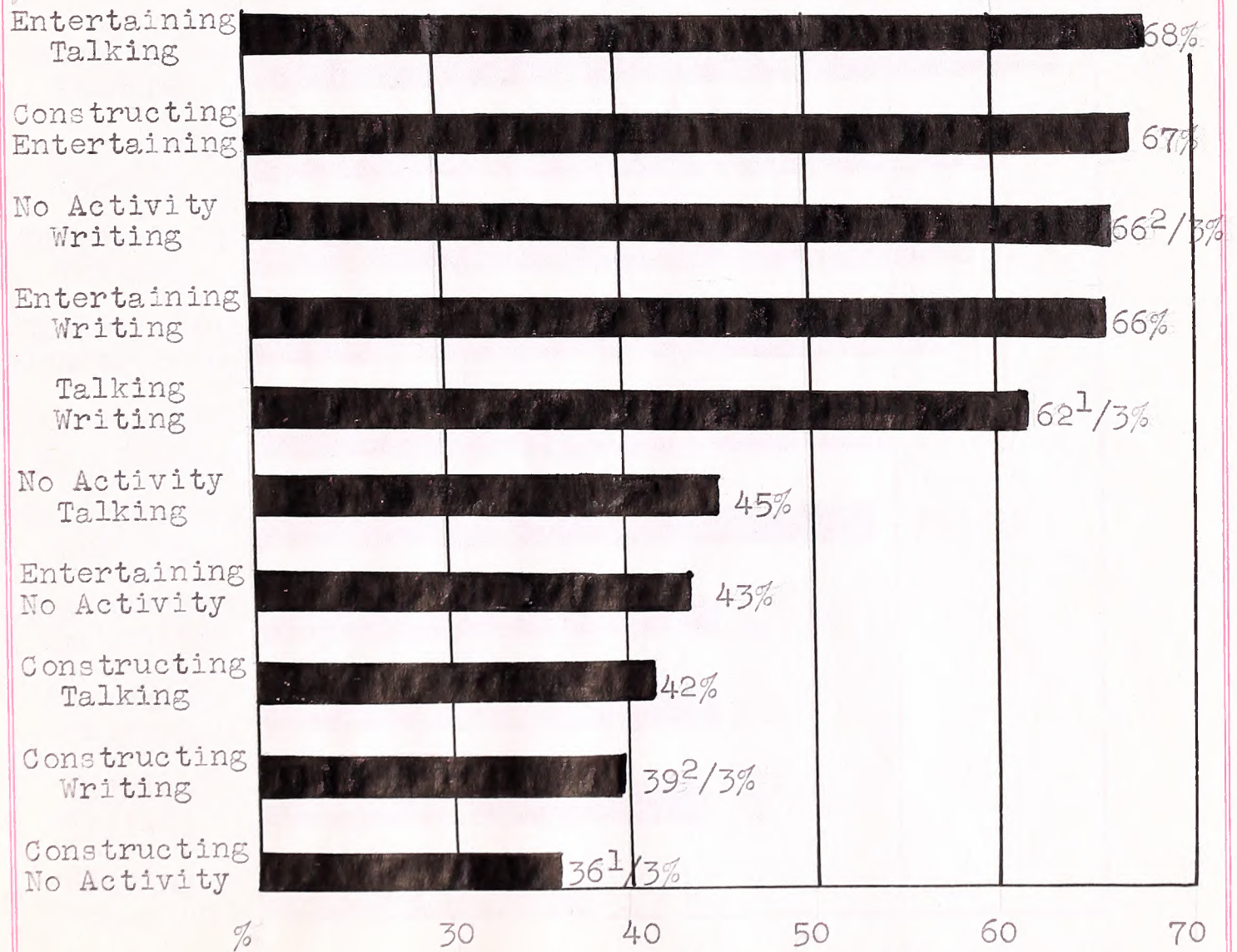




Graph V..

Per Cent of Children Who Chose Excursion Assignments  
When Rated With Other Assignments.

Excursion  
rated with:



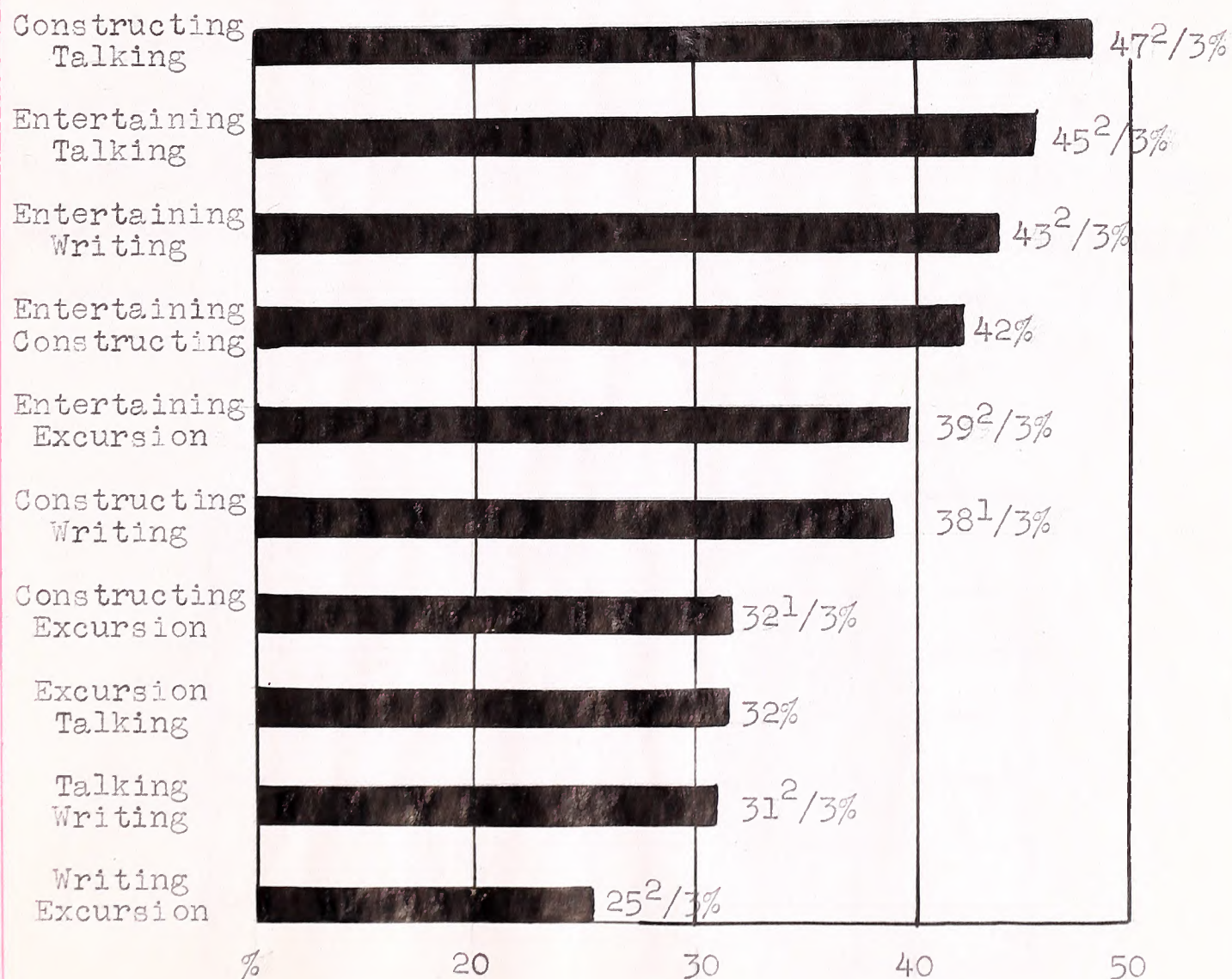




Graph VI.

Per Cent of Children Who Chose Assignments Without Activity  
When Rated With Other Assignments..

Assignments  
Without  
Activity  
rated with:









# INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Because of individual differences, it is not likely that any one type of assignment will have the same appeal for all children. It is inevitable that some will vary from the average. The theory that individuals differ is defended by the results of this investigation. The general statements which have been made regarding preferences must be modified when applied to individual cases.

Several cases in this study deviate from the general pattern of choices. They are interesting to record. The following table shows a sample of each type of activity assignment representing the individual preferences of six different children who do not conform to the general pattern.

Sample of Atypical Cases

Table VII

Child	Activity	Choice		
		1st	2nd	3rd
1st	Writing	0	2	16
2nd	Talking	0	3	15
3rd	Constructing	1	1	16
4th	Entertaining	0	3	15
5th	Excursion	18	0	0
6th	No Activity	17	1	0

Very definite aversions to writing, as a motive for reading, were indicated by twenty-seven children who failed to con-





sider, in first place, any reading assignments which involved writing. In fact, several of these children rated such assignments as their third preference fifteen or more times out of a possible eighteen.

Seventeen children apparently were not interested in reading for the purpose of talking about what they have read. This dis-interest is indicated by the fact that these children failed to give a first choice rating to any assignment that involved talking. Four children were even more decided in their indifference to this type of assignment, rating it in third place fifteen or more times.

Two girls failed to give a first choice rating to any of the reading assignments which related to constructing activities. One girl rated these assignments in third place sixteen times and the other, thirteen times out of a possible eighteen.

Reading assignments which involved entertaining were not considered by six children to be of sufficient interest to warrant a first choice rating in any instance. Two of these children went so far as to rate these assignments in third place fifteen or more times.

Six children diverged from the general pattern far enough to give the highest possible rating to reading assignments which involved going on excursions. They chose these reading assignments first eighteen times.

Reading exercises which did not require any activity were preferred by two children who rated them first in every group.





One of these children apparently was not interested enough in reading assignments which involved talking to rate that type of assignment in first place at any time.





## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY





## SUMMARY

The purpose of this investigation was to determine, through an evaluation of their reactions to reading assignments, the relative degree of children's interest in various reading situations. The following conclusions may be drawn from the analysis of the responses of three hundred boys and girls.

1. The order of preference of children for the assignments tested was: 1. excursions; 2. no activity; 3. constructing; 4. entertaining; 5. talking; 6. writing.

2. The most conspicuous difference, and the only significant one between the children of progressive schools and those of conservative schools, was a greater preference on the part of progressive school children for assignments which involved talking.

3. Girls preferred writing assignments more often than boys.

4. Good readers preferred assignments involving construction activities to a greater extent than poor readers. In the other activities there was no distinction between the interests of good readers and the interests of poor readers.

5. Bright children and dull children showed the same order of preference for the various reading activities.

6. Of all the combinations of reading situations allied to the various activities, assignments involving writing were most popular when rated with assignments involving talking and assignments without activity.



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1. The order of preference of children for the assignments tested was: 1. examination; 2. no activity; 3. constructing; 4. entertaining; 5. talking; 6. writing.

2. The most conspicuous differences, and the only significant one between the children of progressive schools and those of conservative schools, was a greater preference on the part of progressive school children for assignments which involved talking.

3. Girls preferred writing assignments more often than boys.

4. Good readers preferred assignments involving construction activities to a greater extent than poor readers. In the other activities there was no distinction between the interests of good readers and the interests of poor readers.

5. Bright children and dull children showed the same order of preference for the various reading activities.

6. Of all the combinations of reading situations offered the various activities, assignments involving writing were most popular when rated with assignments involving talking and assignments without activity.



Assignments involving talking were most popular when judged with assignments which involve writing and constructing activities.

Reading assignments which involve constructing activities rated highest when judged with assignments relating to writing and entertaining activities.

Assignments which relate to reading for the purpose of entertaining were most interesting when rated with assignments that involve talking and writing activities.

Assignments which require reading in preparation for an excursion were most popular when rated with assignments which involve entertaining and talking activities.

Reading assignments which do not require an activity had the highest interest rating when judged with assignments which involve talking and constructing activities.

7. Many children tended to vary from the general trend of interests. Some individuals showed consistent preferences for activities which were not preferred by the group as a whole.





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APPENDIX





NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

This is an exercise that will help teachers find out some of the reasons why boys and girls like to read.

Read over the sentences in the first group.

Place a 1 in front of the exercise that you would like to do best.

Place a 2 in front of the exercise that you would like to do next best.

Place a 3 in front of the exercise that you would like to do least of all.

Do this for each group.

Be sure to read over all three sentences in the exercise before placing a number in front of any of them.

This is not a test and you will not be marked on it.

If you need any help in reading the exercises your teacher will help you.

#### Group 1

\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making an interesting booklet about Thomas Edison.

\_\_\_\_ Read so you can take part in a class discussion about Thomas Edison.

\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making an exhibit about Thomas Edison.

#### Group 2

\_\_\_\_ Read so you can put on a visiting day program about Thomas Edison.

\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for a movie you are going to see on the life of Thomas Edison.

\_\_\_\_ Read for information about the life of Thomas Edison.

#### Group 3

\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in planning and arranging an exhibition about glass blowing.

\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a composition about glass blowing for your English class.

\_\_\_\_ Read so you can plan a program about glass blowing for a visiting grade.





#### Group 4

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about glass blowing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your visit to the Public Library to see an exhibition of glass blowing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can explain a moving picture about glass blowing to the rest of the class.

#### Group 5

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make posters showing ways of pasteurizing milk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can explain to the class the method of pasteurizing milk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to discover how milk is pasteurized.

#### Group 6

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for a trip to a dairy to see milk being pasteurized.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can give a program of lantern slides to a visiting grade.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a composition about pasteurization for your English class.

#### Group 7

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can take part in a class discussion about the duties of a reporter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making posters about the work of a reporter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can plan an Assembly program about the duties of a reporter.

#### Group 8

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to find out about the duties of a reporter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can write a letter to a friend telling about the duties of a reporter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your trip to a newspaper publishing house to learn about the duties of a reporter.





#### Group 9

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can discuss in class the duties of an aviator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the duties of an aviator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a diary of an aviator, pretending you are an aviator.

#### Group 10

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can make lantern slides about the duties of an aviator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can give an Assembly program about the duties of an aviator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for a trip to the local airport to see some of the duties of an aviator.

#### Group 11

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can take part in a class discussion about the duties of an air hostess.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your visit to a commercial airport to hear an air hostess tell about her duties.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a composition about the duties of an air hostess.

#### Group 12

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the duties of an air hostess.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can plan an Assembly program of lantern slides about the duties of an air hostess.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make posters showing the duties of an air hostess.

#### Group 13

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making scenery for a play about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make a notebook about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your visit to a museum to see an exhibition on the history of the American flag.





#### Group 14

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can give a short talk to the class on the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help so you can give, for a visiting class, a short play about the history of the American flag.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the history of the American flag.

#### Group 15

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about cotton.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can make a notebook about cotton.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can make an exhibit about cotton.

#### Group 16

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for a trip you are going to take to a factory to see cotton cloth being made.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can give a talk about cotton to the class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can give a program of lantern slides about cotton to a visiting grade.

#### Group 17

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in putting on an assembly play about life in the Colonial period.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can write a play about life in the Colonial period.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read, for your own enjoyment, a play about life in the Colonial period.

#### Group 18

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can explain, to the class, a play that is to be given about life in the Colonial period.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making scenery for a play about life in the Colonial period.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you will better understand a play about life in





the Colonial period that you are going to see at another school.

#### Group 19

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a story about fishing for the school magazine.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can tell an exciting story about fishing to the class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in taking a friend on a successful fishing trip.

#### Group 20

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making an interesting fishing exhibit for a hobby show.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for information which will help you to have a successful fishing trip with an experienced fisherman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read for your own enjoyment a story about fishing.

#### Group 21

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about cameras and photography.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can better understand a visit to the High School Camera Club.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can entertain the Camera Club with an exhibition of your hobby, photography.

#### Group 22

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can get help and information on how to develop snapshots.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can explain to your classmates how to care for a camera.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write an interesting letter to a friend telling why you chose photography for a hobby.

#### Group 23

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can tell a story about camping to the class.





\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making your next camping trip a successful one.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for your own enjoyment a story about fishing.

#### Group 24

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in planning a program about camping for the next Girl or Boy Scout meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get information so you can make an interesting notebook about camping.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making some useful article to be used on your next camping trip.

#### Group 25

\_\_\_\_\_ Read the story of Louisa May Alcott in order to make an interesting notebook about her.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can dramatize a short play about Louisa May Alcott for another grade.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read the story of Louisa May Alcott to get ready for your visit to her home in Concord, Mass.

#### Group 26

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the life of Louisa May Alcott.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read the life of Louisa May Alcott so you can give an interesting talk about it to the class.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get information so you can make an exhibit about Louisa May Alcott.

#### Group 27

\_\_\_\_\_ Read three mystery stories to find out which one you will go to see as a moving picture.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get a background so you can write a short mystery story for your school magazine.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read a mystery story for your own enjoyment.

#### Group 28

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help so you can put on a mystery play at a





Parent-Teachers' meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making scenery for a mystery play.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read a mystery story to tell the class.

Group 29

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for the movie Heidi which you are going to see.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for information so you can give, for a visiting grade, a playlet about the story of Heidi.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get help in making scenery for a play about Heidi.

Group 30

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Heidi so you can make an interesting notebook about the story.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Heidi for your own enjoyment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Heidi so you can tell interesting parts of the story to a lower grade.

Group 31

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making a border showing the art of the American Indians.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in planning an Assembly program about the art of the American Indians.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about American Indian art.

Group 32

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make an interesting notebook on the art of the American Indians.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn what to notice in American Indian art during your visit to the Indian Museum at Harvard, Mass.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can give a talk on the art of the American Indians at a Visiting Day program.

Group 33

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about Walter Damrosch and his programs.





\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can plan an entertainment about Walter Damrosch for a visiting grade.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get information so you can give a talk about Walter Damrosch to a lower grade.

#### Group 34

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for a concert you are going to see conducted by Walter Damrosch.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can write a composition about Walter Damrosch for your English class.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make posters about Walter Damrosch.

#### Group 35

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can plan an exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings to show another grade.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for information in giving a class talk about the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to get ready for your trip to the museum of Fine Arts to see the pictures by Leonardo da Vinci.

#### Group 36

\_\_\_\_\_ Read for help in making backgrounds for pictures by Leonardo da Vinci which you are going to show on Parents' Day.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read so you can make an interesting booklet about the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read to learn about the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci.







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